DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 609 CS 207 588

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TITLE	Awareness of Audiences' Needs: A Charade.
PUB DATE	82
NOTE	2p.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT	Exercise Exchange; v27 n1 p46 Fall 1982
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Class Activities; College English; Descriptive Writing; Higher Education; High Schools; Learning Activities; Paragraph Composition; Teaching Methods; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Exercises
IDENTIFIERS	Charades; Following Directions; PF Project

ABSTRACT

THE FOLLOWING IS THE FULL TEXT OF THIS DOCUMENT: LEVEL: High school and college. AUTHOR'S COMMENT: I used this mini-unit to initiate the class in working effectively as a peer group. Moreover, the task I assigned demands that students develop an awareness of their audience's needs by providing an immediate and concrete response. THE APPROACH: (1) One class period: each of three groups was asked to choose a topic for a charade, and then to write its own process, or set of instructions for performing it. The instructions were written in class. Sets of instructions were a single paragraph and took about twenty minutes to write. It's important to remind students that instructions must be strictly behavioral - metaphoric commands, e.g., "grin like a shark," are ruled out. This exercise presented us with our first rhetorical dilemmas; if our charades were to be guessed, we obviously needed to define our audience and limit our choice of topics. We solved these problems by confining ourselves to the titles of popular movies and television shows. Each group was asked to give its set of instructions to a second group to perform before the third group. The second, or acting, group had no idea what the first group's charade was all about; all they had were the instructions for performing it: "lift your right foot," "wave your hand," "grin and shake your head," and so on. The students saw that if their writing was not effective, if their instructions were not clear and concise, if they were too diffuse, if they'd given their audience too much or too little, something too complicated or too simple, then one group couldn't act it, and the other group couldn't guess it. In other words, if they hadn't adequately communicated the information that was necessary for the other two groups to act out and interpret the charade, then the process wouldn't work. (2) For the next class, each student was asked to write his own set of instructions for a charade to read to his group. The group had to guess the title from these written instructions. Students were asked to observe the group's responses to ascertain the cause of whatever difficulties the members had in interpreting the charade. (3) For class number 3, students were asked to write rhetorical analyses of their own instructions. Since the entire rhetorical process had been very concrete, and apparent, these analyses were easy for a group of novices to write. Moreover, when we discussed what we had learned from the entire process, we were able to abstract a list of criteria which served as the basis for annotating our next set of papers. (Author)

ED236609

Awareness of Audiences' Needs: A Charade

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Level:

High school and college

Author's Comment

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The Approach

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EXERCISE EXCHANGE v27 n1 Fall 1982

CS207588

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